

פרשת בא

Let's go back in time to last week's Parshas Voeiro and review the conversation that occurred between Moshe Rabbenu and Par'o at the height of מצות צפרדעים, the plague of frogs.

We read (Sh'mos Perek 8/P'sukim 4-7)

וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲעֵתִירוּ אֵלַי ה' וְיִסַּר הַצְּפַרְדֵּיִם מִמֶּנִּי וּמֵעַמִּי וְאֲשַׁלְּחָה אֶת הָעָם וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לֵה': וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְפַרְעֹה הַתְּפָאֵר עָלַי לְמַתִּי אֶעֱתִיר לְךָ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וְלָעַמֶּךָ לְהַכְרִית הַצְּפַרְדֵּיִם מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ רַק בַּיָּר תִּשְׁאַרְנָה: וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר כְּדַבְּרְךָ לְמַעַן יִתְדַע כִּי אֵין כֹּה' אֶ...לְקִינוֹ: וְסָרוּ הַצְּפַרְדֵּיִם מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ וּמֵעַבְדֶיךָ וּמֵעַמֶּךָ רַק בַּיָּר תִּשְׁאַרְנָה:

Par'o called to Moshe and to Aharon and said, 'Supplicate to Hashem and He should remove the frogs from me and from my people and I will send the people [Israel] and they will bring offerings to Hashem.' Moshe said, to Par'o, 'Glorify yourself over me as for when¹ I should supplicate for you and for your servants and for your people to excise the frogs from you and from your houses; they will remain only in the river.' Par'o said, 'for tomorrow'; Moshe said, 'According to your word so that you should know that there is none like Hashem our G-d. The frogs will turn away from you and from your houses and from your servants and from your people; they will remain only in the river.

The question before us as we analyze Moshe's offer is the meaning of the words התפאר עלי which we translated as 'glorify yourself over me'.

The implication of this translation is that Moshe is offering Par'o an opportunity to show his power in certain respects. Par'o is being offered the opportunity to say when he wants that plague to conclude.

And that is the interpretation that we see that many of the commentators write in one form or another. Targum Onkelos renders the words התפאר עלי as:

שאל לך גבורא

¹ As Rashi points out here, and as is evident from the continuation of the verses, Moshe authorized Par'o to say when the plague would conclude, not when Moshe would offer the prayers for the plague's conclusion.

request might for yourself.

The explanation given by Targum Yonoson ben Uziel is:

שִׁבַּח נַפְשְׁךָ

Praise to yourself.

Ibn Ezra phrases it as follows:

ויאמר משה לפרעה התפאר עלי אעשה לך תפארת, שאעתיר אל השם ויסר המכה ביום שתבקש.

Moshe said to Pa'ro, 'Glorify yourself over me' – I will make you a beautiful act. I will supplicate to Hashem and He will remove the plague on the day that you will request.

Rashi writes:

התפאר עלי - כמו (ישעיהו יטו²) היתפאר הגרזן על החוצב בו, משתבח לומר אני גדול ממך...וכן התפאר עלי...

Glorify yourself over me – This is as it is written, 'Shall the axe glorify itself over the one who chops with it?' Shall it praise itself to say, 'I am greater than you?' Such is the meaning of *glorify yourself over me*.

As Rashi writes in an additional commentary on this verse, Par'o was given the 'honor' of deciding when the plague of frogs would be lifted. That honor was termed with the phrase: התפאר עלי

² The entire verse reads:

הִיתַפְאֵר הַגְרִזָּן עַל הַחֲצֵב בּוֹ אִם יִתְגַדֵּל הַמַּשׂוֹר עַל מְנִיפּוֹ כְּהַנִּיף שֶׁבֶט וְאֵת מְרִימּוֹ כְּהַרִים מְטָה לֹא עֵץ:

Shall the axe be glorify itself over the one who chops with it? Shall the saw be greater than the one who waves it? As if the staff raises itself like a person raises the staff, not the wood raising itself.

Rashi explains that HaKodosh Boruch Hu is saying that those who are victorious in war find their success because Hashem decreed that they should be successful. Therefore they should not praise themselves for their successes.

They are merely the *kli*, the medium that Hashem uses in order for His Will to be fulfilled.

Glorify yourself.

The question begs to be asked: Why should any type of honor be given to Par'o? Does he deserve any type of aggrandizement? Isn't the core issue that Par'o denies the power of Hashem?

However, a renewed look at the Posuk that Rashi brings – together with the continuation of that Rashi which we have not yet brought – provides us with the answer.

Rashi brought the verse from Yeshaya to be more than an explanation of the phrase **התפאר עלי**. Rashi brought that verse so that we can understand the use of these words in this context.

There is a measure of mocking in allowing Par'o to choose the time of the removal of the plague of frogs.

The purpose is to show that, in fact, Par'o is not glorified whatsoever. Par'o is merely the tool in the hand of the Ribbono Shel Olom.

And that is what Rashi writes in the completion of this section:

השתבח להתחכם ולשאול דבר גדול ולומר שלא אוכל לעשותו:

Let yourself feel praised that you are able to show your wisdom and to request a great matter that [you will think] that I, Moshe, will say, 'I cannot do it'.

And Par'o, to demonstrate his personal sense of invincibility, did not request an immediate removal of the plague of frogs. He said that they should be removed the next day. His response was not only to test Moshe's control but, additionally and perhaps primarily, to declare that he could withstand the onslaught of this terrible plague. Par'o did wish to glorify himself over Moshe. That is, at the very time when he asked Moshe to remove the plague, he still wanted to insist on his strength and power. He was seeking aggrandizement.

And thus, by being given the choice to demonstrate his superiority, Par'o's inferiority was revealed when the plague of frogs was removed on the morrow and Moshe could do what Par'o thought impossible.

Nonetheless, since Par'o immediately recanted his willingness to let Israel go to serve Hashem when the plague was removed, we must ask ourselves if the result of this opportunity for Par'o to 'glorify himself' was truly successful in revealing G-d's majesty or not.

How did the events appear to the outside world, to those unable to fathom G-d's reasoning? Did it appear that Hashem had the upper hand or did it appear that Par'o came out the winner? Par'o was free of the plague and retained his iron-handed rule over B'nei Yisroel! How did our ancestors, suffering the cruel rule of Par'o, see the events as they unfolded?

And that brings us to our Parshas Bo.

We read at the very beginning of our Parsha (Sh'mos Perek 10/P'sukim 1-2):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פְּרַעֲהַ כִּי אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת לְבָבוֹ וְאֶת לֵב עַבְדָּיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְנִי אֵלֶּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ: וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי וְבֵן בְּנֵי אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת אֶתְנִי אֵשֶׁר שְׂמַתִּי בָם וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה':

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Par'o because I hardened his heart and the heart of his servants in order that I place these signs of Mine in his midst. And in order that you shall tell in the ears of your son and the son of your son that which I mocked Egypt and My signs that I placed against them and you shall know that I am Hashem.'

All of the commentators find this verse difficult. What is the purpose of Moshe's coming to Par'o? It is true that the verses continue 'in order to place My signs' and 'in order that you will tell your generations'. However those purposes are not connected to this reappearance of Moshe before Par'o. Those purposes could easily be achieved without Moshe seeing Par'o an additional time. Hashem could have continued to rain his plagues down upon Egypt without Moshe's presence before Par'o and He could have commanded the telling of the events without Moshe's presence before Par'o.

What was the purpose of Moshe's coming before Par'o?

Rashi writes:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פְּרַעֲהַ - וְהִתְרַחֵם בּוֹ:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Par'o' – and give him a warning.

Nesivos Shalom (Parshas Bo/Ki a'ni hichbad'ti) explains that by commanding Moshe to warn Par'o, HaKodosh Boruch Hu was presenting Par'o with yet another opportunity to repent. 'Come to Par'o and tell him to mend his ways, Hashem told Moshe. Give yet another chance to be saved from the ultimate punishment that is awaiting him.'

According to this explanation, we find that there is a disagreement between Rashi and Rambam regarding the status of Par'o at this time.

Regarding *Bechira* Chofshis, Free Will, and the opportunity to repent, Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuva Perek 6/Halacha 3):

ואפשר שיחטא אדם חטא גדול או חטאים רבים עד שיתן הדין לפני דיין האמת שיהא הפרעון מזה החוטא על חטאים אלו שעשה ברצונו ומדעתו שמונעין ממנו התשובה ואין מניחין לו רשות לשוב מרשעו כדי שימות ויאבד בחטאו שיעשה...לפיכך כתוב בתורה (שמות ד/כא³) ואני אחזק את לב פרעה, לפי שחטא מעצמו תחלה והרע לישראל הגרים בארצו...נתן הדין למנוע התשובה ממנו עד שנפרע ממנו, לפיכך חזק הקדוש ברוך הוא את לבו, ולמה היה שולח לו ביד משה ואומר שלח ועשה תשובה וכבר אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אין אתה משלח שנאמר (שם ט/ל⁴) ואתה ועבדיך ידעתי וגו' (שם ט/טז⁵) ואולם בעבור זאת העמדתיך, כדי להודיע לבאי העולם שבזמן שמונע הקדוש ברוך הוא התשובה לחוטא אינו יכול לשוב אלא ימות ברשעו שעשה בתחילה ברצונו...

³ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּלִקְתָּךְ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָּל הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר שִׁמְתִי בְיָדְךָ וְעָשִׂיתָם לְפָנַי פְּרַעַה וְאֲנִי אֶחְזַק אֶת לְבוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת הָעָם:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'When you go to return to Egypt, see all of the wonders that I placed in your hand and you shall do them before Par'o and I Hashem will harden his heart and he will not send out the people.'

⁴ The entire verse reads:

וְאַתָּה וְעַבְדֶיךָ יָדַעְתִּי כִּי טָרַם תִּירָאוּן מִפָּנַי ה' אֲנִי...ל'קים:

You [Par'o] and your servants, I Hashem knows that you do not yet fear from before Hashem The King'.

⁵ The entire verse reads:

וְאִלֶּם בְּעִבּוֹר זֹאת הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ בְּעִבּוֹר הַרְאֵתְךָ אֶת כְּחִי וְלִמְעַן סִפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ:

But, for this reason I Hashem have stood you up [as a king] in order to show you My strength and in order that You will tell My Name in the entire land.

It is possible that a person will commit a great sin or many sins until justice demands from the True Judge that the punishment from this sinner or for those sins that he did willfully and intentionally will be that they prevent him from repenting and do not allow him to repent from his wickedness. The purpose of this is that the person should die and be destroyed for the sin that he did.

Therefore the Torah writes, 'I will harden the heart of Par'o', because he sinned on his own originally and dealt evilly with Israel who were dwelling in his land.

Justice required preventing repentance from him until he would be punished. Therefore Hashem hardened his heart.

Why, then, did Hashem send via Moshe to Par'o and tell him 'Send [out Israel] and repent'? Hashem had already said to Par'o [through Moshe and Aharon], 'you will not send them out' as it says, 'You and your servants, I Hashem know, etc. that because of his I Hashem have stood you up [as a ruler]? This was in order to tell all of humanity that when Hashem prevents a sinner from repenting, the sinner is unable to repent; he will die in his wickedness that he committed at first according to his will.

Rambam's words are persuasive. He quotes the very verses that we have been learning these last weeks. How could there be an opportunity for Par'o, wallowing in his sins that he chose to commit, to repent? How could it be possible for him to change his ways? How are we to understand Rashi?

Nesivos Shalom replies that Rashi could hold that although Par'o was totally evil, even then there is an inner-core within a person, any person, that allows him to overcome his present situation and emerge from the depths.

Nesivos Shalom explains that just like in the physical world we have many documented instances of individuals finding meta-normal power, such as the person lifting an impossibly heavy load that fell upon his child to save his life, so each individual has a potential for a spiritual power that is capable of rising above his meta-normal.

He brings a proof from the King Menashe who wallowed in evil and yet, despite that it was 'impossible to repent', he repented.

And so we read in Divrei HaYomim II (Perek 33/P'sukim 10-13):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶל עַמּוֹ וְלֹא הִקְשִׁיבוּ: וַיָּבֵא ה' עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת שָׂרֵי הַצָּבָא אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ
אֲשׁוּר וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת מְנַשֶּׁה בַּחֲחִים וַיֹּאסְרֵהוּ בַּנְּחֹשֶׁתִים וַיֹּלִיכֵהוּ בְּבֵלָה: וַיִּכְהַצֵּר לוֹ חֲלָה
אֶת פָּנָיו ה' אֵ...לִקְיוֹ וַיִּכְנַע מְאֹד מִלִּפְנֵי אֵ...לִקְיֵי אָבֹתָיו: וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֵלָיו וַיַּעֲתֶר לוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַע
תַּחֲנֻנָתוֹ וַיִּשְׁיבֵהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם לְמַלְכוּתוֹ וַיֵּדַע מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֵ...לִקְיִים:

Hashem said to Menashe and to his people and they did not attend. Hashem brought upon them the officers of the army of the King of Assyria and they captured Menashe among the thorns and they bound him with copper bindings and they led him to Bavel. And when it pressed upon him, Menashe supplicated before Hashem his G-d and he became very humble before the G-d of his fathers. Menashe prayed to Him and He answered him and he heard his supplication and He returned him to Yerushalayim to his reign and Menashe knew that Hashem is the G-d.

However, not all choose to avail themselves of the potential and to follow the example sent by the once-evil Menashe.

Chazal teach us that the once-Tanna, Elisha ben Avuya, now known as אחר - 'the other one', had the opportunity to overcome the depths into which he sank; but he did not rise to the occasion⁶.

And the same is true of Par'o the King of Egypt. Moshe's warning to Par'o was in and of itself an invitation to change, an indication that he did not have to be destroyed.

Par'o ignored that invitation.

And thus, we return to the words of Moshe Rabbenu to Par'o in Parsha Vo'eiro. We look one more time at the phrase **התפאר עלי** and, in concert with the explanation of Nesivos Shalom, we wonder if Par'o was given another chance then to rise above the occasion to repent –but he didn't, and thus continued to survive, holding court and being a regal figure despite all of the warnings that he received.

And the question is raised once more? Was there the proper kavod for the Ribbono Shel Olom in the constant wave of seemingly ineffective plagues, misleading

⁶ See Masseches Chagiga 15 a.

remarks of Par'o, and renewal of the imposition of slavery upon Israel for many, many months?⁷

⁷ Par'os audacious refusal to submit to the Will of HaKodosh Boruch was apparent to the very end.

We read in our Parshas Bo (Perek 11/Posuk 4):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר ה' כְּחֹצֵת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם:
Moshe said [to Par'o], 'Thus said Hashem, "At about midnight I will go in the midst of Egypt."

In fact, however, when the plague of the first-born occurred, it wasn't at 'about midnight'. It was precisely midnight! That is what we read later on in the Parsha (Posuk 29):

וַיְהִי בַחֲצִי הַלַּיְלָה וַה' הִכָּה כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל כִּסְאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר הַשֶּׁבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַבּוֹר וְכָל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה:
It was at midnight and Hashem smote every first-born in the Land of Egypt, from the first-born of Par'o who will sit on the throne until the first-born of the captive who was in the pit of prison and all the first-born of the animals.

Rashi explains in the earlier verse:

כחצת הלילה...ורבותינו דרשוהו...שאמר משה כחצות, דמשמע סמוך לו או לפניו או לאחריו, ולא אמר בחצות, שמא יטעו אצטגניני פרעה, ויאמרו משה בדאי הוא:
At about midnight – our Rabbis interpreted that Moshe said 'at about midnight' which implies near midnight, before or after, and did not say 'at midnight'.
The reason was that perhaps Par'o's astrologers would err [and not know that *the* midnight that Hashem struck the first-born was actually midnight with exactitude. And then they would say 'Moshe is a liar'.

Furthermore, in that same section we read (Posuk 8) Moshe's parting words to Par'o after Par'o banished him from his court:

וַיֵּרְדוּ כָּל עַבְדֵיךָ אֵלַי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לִי לֵאמֹר צֵא אִתָּה וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרִגְלֶיךָ וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן אֵצֵא וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַם פְּרֹעָה בְּחָרִי אָף:
"All of your (Par'o) servants will come down to me and bow down to me saying, 'Go out, you and all of the people who are under your command and then I will go out [of Egypt]"; Moshe went out furiously from before Par'o.

Do we think for a moment that Moshe's fury was personal? We do not think so even for a moment.

Moshe's fury was at Par'o's unbelievable insolence in continuing to deny Hashem.

In fact, S'fas Emes writes that the period of the Ten Plagues certainly appears to be one in which *K'vod Shamayim*, Divine Honor, was trampled upon.

We read (Parshas Bo 5739 d.h. b'midrash):

במדרש כי אני הכבדתי את לבו. (משלי כז/ג) כָּבֵד אָבֶן וְנֹטֵל הַחֹל וְכַעַס אָוִיל כָּבֵד מִשְׁנֵיהֶם: פִּירוּשׁ יוֹתֵר הַפְּלֵא וּפְלֵא מֵה שְׁנוֹתֵן הַבוֹרָא יִתְבַּרַךְ יִכּוֹלֵת לְהַרְשָׁעִים לַעֲשׂוֹת נֶגֶד רְצוֹנוֹ יִתְבַּרַךְ וְהַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרַךְ מֵתַפְאָר בְּזֵה הַכַּח כִּי אֲנִי הַכְּבַדְתִּי כו'. שְׁבִרִיאת הָעוֹלָם אֵינּוּ פְּלֵא. כִּי הוּא כָּל יִכּוֹל. וּמִזֶּה מוֹבֵן כַּח גְּבוּרַתּוֹ יִתְבַּרַךְ אִיךְ נוֹתֵן יָד לְפוֹשְׁעִים...שְׁעוֹשֵׁן נֶגֶד רְצוֹנוֹ יִת'. וְעַל זֶה נִקְרָא הַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרַךְ מֶלֶךְ עֵלּוּב. וְהוּא לַחֲזֵק לְבַבּוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִידַע כִּי כָּל הַסֵּתֵר בְּכַלְלוֹת וּבַפְּרִטוֹת כָּל נֶפֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל. הַכָּל מִכַּח הַבוֹרָא יִתְבַּרַךְ וּלְכַבּוֹדוֹ. וְלִכֵּן אֵל יִפּוֹל לֵב אָדָם עֲלֵיו בְּרֵאוֹתוֹ כַּח הַיֵּצֵר וְתַחבּוּלוֹתָיו כִּי רַבִּים הֵמָּה אֲבָל כּוֹלֵם מֵאֵת נוֹרָא עֲלִילָה יִתְבַּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ.

We learn in the Midrash on the verse 'because I have hardened his heart' – The weight of the stone and the removal of all of the sand – the anger of the evil person is heavier than both. The explanation is that it is most amazing that the Creator Yisborach Sh'mo gives the ability to the wicked to act against His Will. And, Hashem Yisborach glorifies Himself with such behavior and says, 'I hardened his heart etc.'

In fact, the Creation of the world is [less] of a wonder [than is His reaction to Par'o]. Hashem is capable of all. And thus, with allowing the wicked to act against Him, we understand Hashem's might. And that is why He is called 'an unfortunate king'⁸. His purpose is to strengthen the hearts of B'nei Yisroel and to let it be known that all that occurs is hidden from us, the entire picture and the specifics of the soul of each Jew - all that occurs is from the power of the Creator *Yisborach* and it is his honor. Therefore, the heart of a person should not be downfallen when he sees he power of the Yetzer Ha'ra' and its

⁸ In his *Shaar HaO'si'os (heh-Hallel)* Sh'loh HaKodosh writes:

כי על זה קראו בספרי היכלות (פרק יח) להשם יתברך מלך עלוב, כי אין לך עלבון גדול מזה, שבחיים שהוא יתברך שופע באדם, ובאברים שהכין לו לעבדו יחטא לו.

Therefore in the Kabbalistic *Sifrei Heicholos* they refer to Hashem as *Melech A'luv* the 'unfortunate king' because there is no greater insult (עלוב and עלבון are from the same base word) that with the life that HaKodosh Boruch Hu radiates to man and to his limbs to serve Him, man sins against Him.

cunning plans, because he has many of these. Rather, it is to let us know that all comes from Hashem.

S'fas Emes writes similarly in the following year (5640 Parshas Bo d.h. *u'v'Midrash*):

ובמדרש כובד אבן כו'. פירוש שזה גבורה נפלאה ביותר. אשר השם יתברך מתפאר בזה. אשר התעללתי במצרים. במה שנתן כח לרשעים לעשות חפצם ולמרות עיני כבודו והכל בכח הבורא יתברך כי הוא כל יכול וברא הבריאה באופן זה שיהיה שייך התנגדות. והכל בעבור בני ישראל שיהיה נאמר עליהם (תהילים סח/לה⁹) תנו עוז לאלקים. וזה וכעס אויל כבד כו'

In the Midrash of 'the weight of the stone etc.' - the explanation is that this is extraordinarily wondrous Divine might. It is that through which Hashem glorifies Himself that he 'played with Egypt' in as far as He gave power to the wicked to do their desires and to rebel in the eyes of His Honor – and all this comes from the strength of the Creator because He is all able and He created the creation in a way that opposition to Him is possible.

And all of this is for Israel about whom it says, 'Give strength to G-d'. And that is the anger of the evildoer weighing heavily.

By acting in the way that He did, Hashem provided hope for Israel in its darkest of times.

Undoubtedly, we are reminded of the Posuk (Tehillim Perek 91/Posuk 15) that says

יְקַרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ עִמּוֹ אֲנִי בְצָרָה אַחֲלִיצֵהוּ וְאֶכְבְּדֵהוּ:

He will Me and I Hashem will answer him; I am with him in his troubles; I will extricate him and I will honor him.

We read in Parshas Nitzavim (D'vorim Perek 30/Posuk 3):

וְשָׁב ה' אֲלֵינוּ... לְקִיּוֹת שְׁבוּתֵךְ וְרַחֲמֵךְ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךְ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפְצָךְ ה' אֲלֵינוּ... לְקִיּוֹת שָׁמָיִם:

⁹ The complete verse reads:

תְּנוּ עֹז לַאֲלֹהִים... לְקִיּוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל גְּאוֹתוֹ וְעִזּוֹ בַּשְּׁמַיִם:
Give strength to G-d; His greatness is upon Israel and his strength is in the heavens.

Hashem will return with your captives and He will have mercy upon you and he will return and will gather you from all of the peoples that Hashem your G-d dispersed to there.

Rashi writes:

ושב ה' א...ל"קירך את שבותך - היה לו לכתוב והשיב את שבותך, רבותינו למדו מכאן שהשכינה כביכול שרויה עם ישראל בצרת גלותם...

Hashem your G-d will return with your captives – it should have written והשיב – He will bring back [instead of *ושב* – He will return *with*]. Our Rabbis learned from this that the Shechinah, as it were, is with Israel in the troubles of their exile.

That is, when we are suffering indignities, we see that Hashem suffers them as well and we are comforted and strengthened.

But there is certainly an additional point to understand, and it is not far-fetched at all that S'fas Emes meant for us make the connection.

In Masseches B'rachos (33 b) we learn of an errant student who wanted to make the most of the Sh'moneh Esrei that he was reciting as the Sh'liach Tzibbur. We read:

ההוא דנחית קמיה דרבי חנינא, אמר: הא...ל הגדול הגבור והנורא והאדיר והעזוז והיראוי החזק והאמיץ והודאי והנכבד. המתין לו עד דסיים, כי סיים אמר ליה: סיימתינהו לכולהו שבחי דמרך? למה לי כולי האי? אנן הני תלת דאמרינן - אי לאו דאמרינהו משה רבינו באורייתא, ואתו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ותקנינהו בתפלה - לא הוינן יכולין למימר להו, ואת אמרת כולי האי ואזלת!

There was a person who went down¹⁰ [to daven] before Rabi Chanina and he said [in the first bracha of the Sh'moneh Esrei]: 'G-d, He Who is great, He He Who is mighty, He Who is awesome, He Who is powerful, He Who is strong;

¹⁰ A *shliach tzibbur* is referred to (Masseches B'rachos Perek 5/Mishnah 3) as one who is יורד לפני התיבה, going *down* to the stand, in fulfilment of the verse in Tehillim (Perek 130/Posuk 1):

שיר המעלות מן המעמקים קראתיך ה'.
A Song of Ascent: from the depths I called to You, Hashem.

He Who is feared, He Who is strong, He Who is courageous, He Whose existence is certain, He Who is honored.'

Rabi Chanina waited until the *shliach tzibbur* finished and when he finished he said to him, 'Have you completed *all* of the praises of your Master? Why did you say so many? We say the three and had not Moshe Rabbenu said them in the Torah and *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh* not affixed them to our prayer – we would not be allowed to say them – and you said so many [extra]?'

The three praises that Rabi Chanina is referring to are found in Parshas Eikev where we read (D'vorim Perek 10/Posuk 17):

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא
אֱלֹהֵי הַגָּדוֹל וְהַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא
אֱלֹהֵי הַגָּדוֹל וְהַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא

Because Hashem your G-d, He is the G-d of the mighty and the Master of the masters, the G-d Who is great, Who is powerful and Who is awesome; He does not show favoritism and does not take bribery.

Now, it would seem that if Moshe Rabbenu taught us the three praises of:

הגדול הגבור והנורא

He is great, He is mighty, He is awesome

in the Torah, we would not need the additional services of *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh* in order for us to incorporate these praises of Hashem into our Tefilah.

But that hypothesis is dashed when we read what Chazal teach us in Masseches Yoma (69 b):

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה - שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה.
אתא משה אמר הא...ל הגדל הגבר והנורא, אתא ירמיה ואמר: נכרים מקרקרין
בהיכלו, איה נוראותיו? לא אמר נורא. אתא דניאל, אמר: נכרים משתעבדים בבניו,
איה גבורותיו? לא אמר גבור. אתו אינהו ואמרו: אדרבה, זו היא גבורת גבורתו
שכובש את יצרו, שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים. ואלו הן נוראותיו - שאלמלא מוראו של
הקדוש ברוך הוא היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות?

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said, 'Why were they called *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh* –The Men of the *Great* Assembly? [Why were they called 'Great'?] It is because "they returned the crown to its former glory".

Moshe came and said, Hashem is הגדל הגבר והנורא הא... G-d Who is great, Who is mighty, Who is awesome. Then Yirmiyahu HaNovi came and said "the *goyim* are cackling in His Sanctuary! Where is His awesomeness?" Yirmiyahu omitted *ha'noro*-awesome!¹¹

Doniyel came and said, 'The *goyim* are enslaving His sons. Where is His Might? He omitted 'Mighty'!¹²

Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh came and said, 'To the contrary. This is His might that He overcomes His *yetzer*¹³ and is slow to anger at the wicked. This is His

¹¹ We read in his Sefer (Perek 32/Posuk18):

עֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֵפִים וּמִשְׁלֵם עֹן אָבוֹת אֶל חֵיק בְּנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵיהֶם הָאֵל... הַגְּדוֹל הַגְּבוֹר ה' צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:

Hashem does kindness for a thousand generations and pays the sin of the fathers to the bosom of their sons after them; He is the G-d, the Great and the Mighty; Hashem of Hosts is His Name.

¹² We read in his Sefer (Perek 9/Posuk 4):

וְאֶתְפַּלֵּלָהּ לֵה' אֵל...ל"קִי וְאֶתְנַדֶּה וְאֶמְרָה אָנָּה אֵל...דְּנִי הָאֵל... לַגְּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא שְׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד לְאֶהֱבָיו וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו:

I prayed to Hashem my G-d and I confessed and I said, 'Hashem, the G-d, the Great and the Awesome, He guards the covenant and does kindness to those who love Him and to those who guard His commandments.

¹³ Of course, Hashem has no *yetzer*. This is another expression that allows humans to approach an understanding of His ways.

awesomeness¹⁴ – were it not for His awesomeness over the nations, how is one Israel able to exist among the nations.’¹⁵

Nesivos Shalom concludes his words by citing the classic *Reishis Chochmoh* (17) who writes a unique explanation to the words of Chazal that are found in Masseches Pesachim (87 b). We read there:

¹⁴ We learn that they restored the praises of Moshe Rabbenu in Sefer Nechemia (Perek 9/Posuk 32) where we read:

וְעַתָּה אֲ...לְקִינוּ הָאֵל...לְהַגְדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֹסֵד אֵל יִמְעַט לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת כָּל הַתְּלָאָה
אֲשֶׁר מִצְאָתָנוּ לְמַלְכֵינוּ לְשָׂרֵינוּ וְלַכְהֲנֵינוּ וְלַנְּבִיאָנוּ וְלְאַבְתֵּינוּ וְלְכָל עַמְךָ מִיָּמֵי מַלְכֵי אַשּׁוּר עַד הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה:

And now our G-d, the G-d Who is Great, Who is Mighty, Who is Awesome; He guards the covenant and kindness; it should not be small - all of the travail that found us and to our kings and to our officers and to our Kohanim and to our prophets and to our fathers and to all of Your people from the days of the kings of Assyria until this day.

¹⁵ Rashi's commentary on this Gemara reads:

עובדי עבודה זרה מקרקרים בהיכלו - שראה שרי נבוכדנצר נכנסין להיכל ומריעים בו ככל רצונם.

The idolaters are cackling in His Sanctuary - Hashem saw the officers of Nevuchadnetzar entering the Beis HaMikdosh and sounding off however they wished.

עובדי עבודה זרה משתעבדים בבניו - זה שבעים שנה.

The idolaters are enslaving their sons – for these seventy years.

זו היא גבורתו - שכובש יצרו כל השנים הללו שנשתעבדו בהן ומאריך אפו על כל הגזירות שגוזרים על בניו.

That is His Might – That He conquers His *yetzer* for all of those years that Israel was enslaved during them and He was slow to anger regarding all of the decrees made against His children.

ואלו הן נוראותיו שאלמלא מוראו וכו' - מן יום החורבן אתה למד נוראותיו, שכל האומות נאספו להשמידם ונתקיימו מהן.

This is His awesomeness that were it not for His fearfulness – from the day of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh you learn His awesomeness. All of the nations of the world gathered to destroy Israel and Israel out-survived all of them.

כל מה שאומר לך בעל הבית עשה, חוץ מ'צא'.

All that the master of the house says to do – do it. Except if he says, 'leave'.

The meforshim explain the intent of the Gemara because surely when one is told by a host to leave, we expect him to leave. How could they be told to ignore such a directive of 'leave!' from his host?

Reishis Chochmo explains that the בעל הבית in this context is Hashem; He is the Master of the House, the world He built.

Whatever the Master tells us to do in His world, we should do, Chazal say. Of course we do what G-d tells us.

There is an exception to that golden rule, though.

There is one instance when even when the Master says something, we do not follow orders.

If G-d says, 'leave My Household. I am banishing you from My Presence', from My world, do not listen to Him.

No matter what He said, cling to Him; ignore Him. Do not leave because He will always take you back if you are determined not to be cut off from before Him Yisborach.

It is His awesomeness and His might that He showed to the nations of the world that is our legacy to keep, to guard, to cherish – if only we will wish to.

And what is one way that we can help assure that we will not be banished? By emulating His *gevurah* – His might.

Hashem withheld His anger against those who deserved to receive its brunt force. Let us control ourselves, even when we [think that we] are correct and withheld our feelings, not only what we say, but what we think and the body language that expresses our displeasure.

Perhaps if we truly imitate His Divine behavior, we will never hear the word צא being spoken by Him and we will merit to dwell in peace and tranquillity, protected by His visible and palpable holy blessing.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock

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